

26. China



China, officially the **People's Republic of China** (PRC), is a country in East Asia and the world's most populous country, with a population of around 1.42 billion. China is one of the largest countries in the world, its area is almost as large as the whole Europe.

- area: 9,596,961 km² (3rd largest country in the world)
- the capital: Beijing
- population: 1,420,062,022 (2019)
- official language: Mandarin
- formation: 1912, first pre-imperial dynasty c. 2070 BCE
- member: G20, APEC, WTO, active partner of ASEAN
- currency: yuan (CNY)

Location and natural conditions

China stretches from the Tian Shan and Karakoram ranges in Central Asia to lowlands near the Pacific in the east. China covers most of area in Eastern Asia. Significant physical features created important natural borders between China and its neighbours – the Gobi desert, the Altai Mountains, Tian Shan, Pamir, Karakoram and the Himalayas. The Himalayas create a long boundary between China and India, Nepal, Bhutan and partially also Myanmar.

Among the most important physical features are also the North China Plain, Kunlun Mountains and the Tibetan Plateau. The Taklamakan Desert is surrounded by the Kunlun, Pamir and Tian Shan and similar as Gobi, it was created in the rain shadow of these mountain ranges. The southern part of the North China Plain is traditionally referred to as the Central Plain, which formed the cradle of the Chinese civilization.

Broadly speaking, the relief of China is high in the west and low in the east; consequently, the direction of flow of the major rivers is generally eastward. The three principal rivers of China are the Huang He, the Yangtze, and the Xi (Si-Kiang). The distribution of surface water in China is extremely uneven. Only a small part of the country has sufficient quantities year-round. From the southeast to the northwest, the surface water decreases as the relief becomes more mountainous. The climate in China differs from region to region because of the country's highly complex topography. A large part of the country is influenced by change of dry season and wet monsoon period.



Three Gorges Dam on the Yangtze river is the largest hydroelectric power station in the world



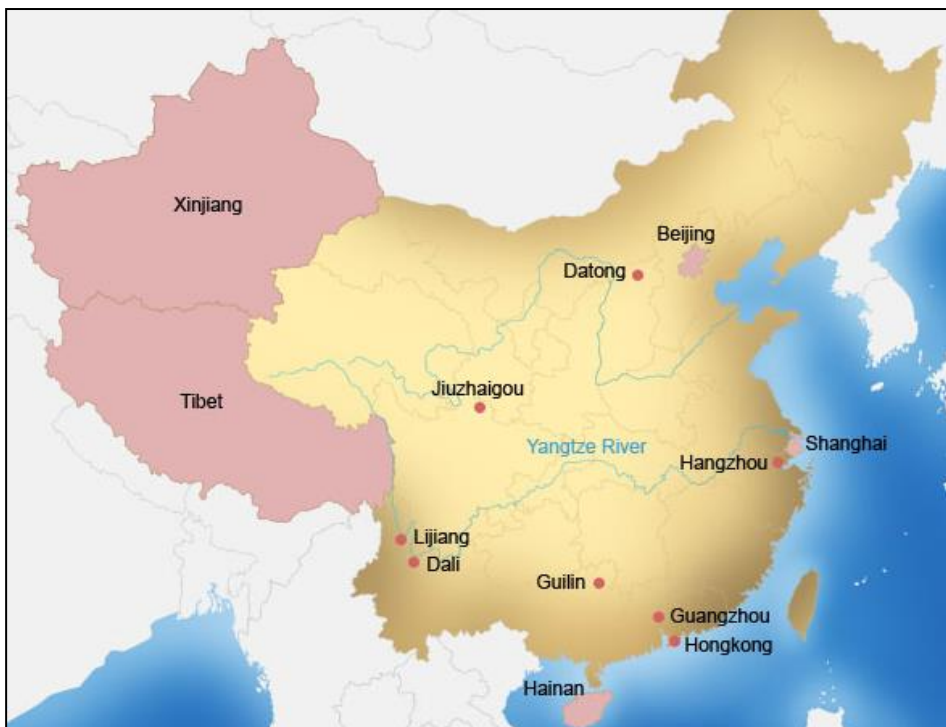
The Pearl River Delta (PRD) is one of the most urbanized regions in the world and one of the wealthiest in China. PRD is a megalopolis, with large metropolitan areas as Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Foshan and Hong Kong.

Population

Population density and distribution in China is very uneven. The biggest contrasts are between the eastern half of China and the western part. The highest density is in the North China Plain and near estuaries of the country's longest rivers (the Pearl River or Yangtze Delta-Shanghai). Sparsely populated are deserts, high mountains and the Tibetan Plateau.

China is a multinational country, with a population composed of a large number of ethnic and linguistic groups. The Han (Chinese), the largest group, outnumber the minority groups or minority nationalities in every province or autonomous region except Tibet and Xinjiang.

In spite the fact that China is known to be the birthplace of the religious schools of Confucianism and Taoism, the country is nowadays officially an atheist nation, with about 1/5 of population without claiming their religion. Islam is significant in Xinjiang and Buddhism in Tibet.



Xinjiang and Tibet are two largest provinces of China, but much less inhabited than the rest of the country. Both of these regions are known for their distinct groups (Tibetans and Uyghurs), who have been subjects to varying degrees of oppression.

In both of these regions are often protests against Chinese politics or even occupation - as the locals put it. Activists from all over the world are warning about violations of human rights in these regions – for example drastic oppression of Tibetan buddhism.

In 1959 Dalailama and many Tibetans left Tibet, most of them living in India.

The Chinese population was for a long time influenced by its one child policy, which ended in 2015. Shrinking workforce and ageing of population led government to end this policy. Low birth rates and increase of elderly people can cause country's economy to suffer. To undo this demographic time bomb, local authorities are coming up with new ways to encourage more childbirth.

Economy

China is often said to be the manufacture of the world. By making things and selling them to foreigners, China has transformed itself - and the world economy with it. In 1990 it produced less than 3% of global manufacturing output by value; its share now is nearly a quarter. For example China produces nowadays about 70% of the world's mobile phones and 60% of its shoes.

China transformed itself from one of the poorest countries to a rapidly expanding economy. To country with big modern cities as Shanghai or Shenzhen, with big technological improvements and innovations. In contrast to this, there are still millions of poor people (especially in the western part). China made big improvements to reduce rural poverty. Despite this, the difference between rich and poor is still huge. By the global private wealth, Beijing and Hong Kong belong to 10 richest cities in the world.

Agriculture

- China is the world's largest producer of rice and is among the principal sources of wheat, corn, tobacco, soybeans, peanuts, and cotton.

Industry

- textile, garment and electronic industry, machine engineering
- coal, iron ore, wolfram, oil, zinc, lead
- coal-fired power stations, increasing usage and investments in renewable energy

Tourism:

- the Great Wall of China, Terracotta Warriors, Forbidden City
- cities as Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Guangzhou, Lhasa (Potala Palace), Macau (casinos)
- Hainan Island, Sichuan (home of Giant Panda, tea plantations), Yellow Mountains

Key words:

Gobi, Taklamakan, North China Plain, Tibetan Plateau, Tian Shan, Pearl River Delta, Han Chinese, Tibet, Xinjiang, Lhasa, one child policy